



TOWN OF GRAFTON
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MINUTES
SCHOOL COMMITTEE

November 9, 2021
Grafton Municipal Center – Room F
7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Laura Often, Vice Chair
Liz Spinney, Secretary
Rahul Rathi, Member
Jennifer Connelly, Member

Members Absent: Amy Marr

Student Representatives: Annabelle Webber
Meroska Gouhar

Also Present: James Cummings, Superintendent of Schools
Kristen Gasper, Assistant Superintendent

1. Call to Order: At 7:01 p.m, Vice Chair Laura Often opened the meeting.
2. Public Comment: n/a
3. General Business:
 - A. SEPAC - postponed to later date

B. Special Education Report / FY23 Budget - Robert Wall and Nicole MacDonald

Bob Wall welcomed the new SEPAC Treasurer, Stella Dikas. SEPAC recent presentations include Tiered Focused Monitoring Update, Eligibility and Evaluation Basic Rights and an upcoming presentation will discuss changes to the preschool process. On November 2nd, the Special Education department received notice that the Tiered Focus Monitoring action plan has been accepted and completed and the district is 100% compliant. Professional development plans include Language based Learning Disabilities PD, Intensive Programming Curricular supports (Unique Learning Systems), new De-escalation and Physical Intervention Program called Safety-Care as well as exploring building specific co-teaching PD needs. ESY services are being reviewed. The department is considering a more centralized location which makes it easier to reallocate

staff based on student needs, less disruption for all building summer needs, less confusion for parents, and ease for transportation needs. The district is still looking for a Long term High School Special Educator vacancy that has been posted for over a month, reaching out to 15 staffing agencies, continuing to accept applications. There is also a recurring posting for both general and building specific paraprofessionals.

Looking ahead to FY23 and special education budget implications:

- 1 FTE Special Education teacher at GHS due to enrollment and programming changes
- 1 FTE Intensive program nurse at MSS due to move-up.

Monitoring 2 FTE Potential Sp ED teacher additions - 1 FTE at MSS due to grade 3 enrollment changes, 1 FTE @ GMS due to enrollment changes,

Liz Spinney asked how the department measures success. They endeavor to have special education students in the least restrictive environment possible as research supports that this is best for this group of students. Success is also measured in IEP development itself. Jennifer Connelly asked for clarification on hiring another FTE teacher to help shift paraprofessionals. Self contained special education classrooms can only have up to 8 students in their classroom. This number can go up to 12 if additional paraprofessionals are hired to support. With an additional teacher, student support would increase and reduce the need for paraprofessionals. Jennifer Connelly asked how they can help address the staffing shortage and avoid teacher burnout. The entire staff has pitched in to provide additional support and recruitment in multiple sources continues. Conversations with building principals about how to boost morale continue. Kristen Gasper held a sub training with 6 new substitute teachers. In Grafton, the shortage is not nearly what other districts are experiencing. Liz Spinney asked if staffing shortage and resource availability has impacted student learning. No impact on programming but the toll on staff is important to acknowledge and address. Continuing to watch trends through progress meetings so that they can respond if student progress becomes an issue.

Laura Often asked if student needs have increased post pandemic/at home learning. Too soon to tell but SEL needs are closely monitored. Does the team need any additional training? Training resources have been provided to address these needs, the district has been very proactive on the SEL needs of students which has been instrumental. The new programs and school adjustment counselors have made an impact. The department is trying to address each staff member's needs individually so they can develop and grow.

C. Vaccination Update- Currently, GHS vaccination rate is 77%; GMS is 74.9%. Once a district reaches 80%, the school committee can consider moving to optional masking. GPS has partnered with Bouvier Pharmacy to provide COVID clinics for students aged 5-11, and will have dates soon. GPS has also been in contact with DPH for on site vaccination clinics. More information to come.

The superintendent is recommending a mandate for full vaccination with a 2x weekly testing alternative. The bargaining units are informally in favor but would not want to see anyone lose their job so units were hopeful that there was an alternative (i.e. testing).

Challenges:

- Tracking vaccination status; particularly when booster shots are factored in. The district will need to define what fully vaccinated means.
- Bargaining units- not seeing any real barriers as long as the alternative is offered,
- Testing - the nursing staff can handle the testing currently but if anything changes, the district will need a back up plan.

Recommendation : move forward with mandated vaccinations for GPS staff with testing provided as an alternative, draft and consider policy.

Liz Spinney asked about the reasoning behind 2x weekly testing versus 1, when considering the supply shortages are being experienced across the supply chain. Testing supply is not an issue. The two times per week would break up staff into two groups so testing is captured near a weekend, multiple testing would allow early detection. Staff would arrive at their contractual time and be tested right away. Jennifer Connelly asked if nurses gather staff vaccination data from the MA portal. No, not available through the portal. Staff have voluntarily provided a copy of their vaccination card. Rahul Rathi asked about COVID cases among students. There are currently 10 cases, 63 since the start of the school year, staff and students included. The daily COVID emails will not be restarted. The dashboard is updated daily on the website. Liz Spinney asked about the timing of a mandate. Nothing set in stone but would provide at least 2-4 weeks notice for staff. Laura Often asked how long the mandate would be in effect. Shrewsbury set their policy for up to 5 years with the ability to revoke at any time. The policy should have some parameters included around testing supply and nursing staffing. The committee agreed to move the recommendation to the policy sub committee for further discussion.

4. Future Agenda Schedule Planning: Technology, Math and Buildings and Grounds reports are on the next agenda. Amy Marr will work with SEPAC on the new meeting date.

5. Approval of Minutes: Liz Spinney made a motion to approve the 10/26/21 minutes. Jennifer Connelly seconded the motion. Motion carried 3-0-1. The minutes for 10/12/21 will be on the agenda for the next meeting.

6. Financial Report:

A. Warrant: Liz Spinney made a motion to approve Warrant #20 dated 11/10/21 in the amount of \$457,069.21. Jennifer Connelly seconded the motion. Motion carried 4-0.

7. Policy:

EBCA Emergency Plans - Second reading.

EBCEE Emergency Closings - Second reading.

EBCC-1 Threat Assessment and EBCC-R Regulations and Procedures for Bomb Threats
Recommended for deletion, second reading.

EBCE School Cancellation Guidelines - Second reading.

Jennifer Connelly asked about providing support services with copies of our emergency plans. Do we have a list of when that has been provided and when? Yes.

Jennifer Connelly made a motion to accept Policy EBCA as a second reading and deleting policy EBCC-1 and EBCC-R. Rahul Rathi seconded the motion. Motion carried 4-0. Jennifer Connelly made a motion to accept Policy EBCE as a second reading. Rahul Rathi seconded the motion. Motion carried 4-0. Jennifer Connelly made a motion to accept Policy EBCEE as a second reading. Rahul Rathi seconded the motion. Motion carried 4-0.

8. Member Reports: Annabelle Webber shared that Q1 ended last week. Sports teams are still going, football and soccer are heading into round 2 at the state level. Cheerleading won SWCL and headed to regionals. Winter sports are starting to practice. Meroska Gouhar participated in the Costume Concert. GHS fall play, Murder on the 518, is next week. Dr. Cummings shared that 14 GHS seniors qualified for the Abigail Adams Scholarship including Annabelle Webber. Liz Spinney participated in Community Reading Day at NGES. Laura Often attended the MASC conference. Takeaways - people are having a hard time and it is okay to acknowledge, districts still have a lot to do for equity and diversity, all resolutions were passed.

9. Correspondence: n/a

10. Executive Session: n/a

11. Adjournment: Liz Spinney made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jennifer Connelly seconded the motion. Motion carried 4-0. Meeting adjourned at 8:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Debne Marlette
Recording Secretary